THE STROKE OAR.

A STORY OF HARVARD VS. YALE.

"Apropos of all this talk about 'professional playing' and 'going to college simply to play foot-ball,'" said the young Harvard fellow, settling himself in the luxurious Pullman seat and looking curiously at the two young Yale fellows and the other young fellow, (all going home, west somewhere, for the holidays). "I'll tell you a queer story. I got it—well, the fact is my brother was on the university crew at that time, and I was down at New London with him the week of the races, and of course I was around with the crew a good deal, and, as a boy will, picked up a good many things that I ought not to have known. You mustn't say anything about it. It would make trouble, even now, if the things were known.

"You see that year our fellows were particularly anxious to win the boat race with Yale. Yale had beat us three times running, and we thought it was about time we did a little celebrating ourselves. We had a good crew, and we had one especially strong man, a fellow named Jennings, who pulled stroke. He was a tremendously powerful oarsman, and if the other fellows could keep up the day of the race the stroke he would set them, we were sure to win. Well, now, what do you think? Four days before the race, that fellow, big and strong as he was, keeled over in the boat just as they were coming in from practice one morning, and was taken up to quarters in a dead faint.

"They got a doctor there as soon as possible; and the doctor looked at him and talked to him and felt of him and listened at him a while and then he looked up and out with it: 'He'll be all right presently, so far as getting about is concerned. But no more rowing for him. The man has a heart trouble—incurable. Put him in a boat again and you kill him.'

"You ought to have heard the crew-captain groan at that. You'd have thought he had heart trouble.

"'Then we might as well give up the race,' said he. 'He was worth any three of the rest of us; and we haven't a man to take his place.'

"The doctor had nothing to say at this, and pretty soon got up to go. Chiswick (the captain) followed him to the door.

"'Doctor, take that back,' said he, almost crying. 'Let him pull in the race, Friday.'

"The doctor shook his head. 'He musn't do it. He must not,' said he. 'He'll come home a dead man if he does.'

"'Well, doctor, you won't say anything about this, please. For certain reasons we'd rather it wouldn't get out.'

"'Certainly not,' said the doctor, and went away.

"Then Chiswick, with a face as long as an oar blade and without a word to anybody save to call Bancroft to come with him, went out the door and down to the river and off for a pull in the pair-oar.

"And now comes the queer thing that happened—or the first part of it.

"Chiswick and Bancroft pulled up stream a good bit, and then resting on their oars had drifted in close ashore, when all at once, looking up, right there on Bartlett's Point, within twenty feet of them, they saw an apparition. There was Jennings, the stroke, ruddy and fresh as ever, standing there and looking at them.

"'Hello, Jen,' Chiswick addressed him, surprised enough, but no believer in ghosts. 'How in the name of the seven wonders did you get yourself well again and down here so quick? You must have had a private locomotive.'

"'Eh?' answered Jennings. 'I—a—I fancy there must be some mistake.'

"And then as they touched the bank they saw from his clothes and his voice and one or two other bits of things, that it wasn't Jennings at all; it was a stranger. Only it was just as much a wonder to them as ever the way the man looked like Jennings. He was 'put up' exactly like him, the same powerful frame, the same long legs and arms, the same big chest and shoulders and when it came to his head and face, of course it was there that the resemblance chiefly was, and it was simply marvelous. The eyes, nose, mouth, the curly hair, even the bit of side whiskers, were exactly alike in the two men. Either might have sat for the other's picture.

"They saw that it wasn't Jennings, how-ever, and apologized for speaking to him. And that made talk, and led to a discussion of boating matters, in which the stranger showed such considerable interest and knowledge that Chiswick presently took a notion into his head—whether it was a notion, entire, I don't know. But it was the beginning of the notion. He asked Bancroft if he'd mind stepping ashore a bit and letting him take the stranger off in the pair-oar for a five minutes' spin. To which Bancroft, of course, agreed, and the stranger quite as readily took his place.

"Chiswick had the bow oar, and the stranger therefore was in front of him.

"'I've a notion somehow from your looks and your talk that you've been in a boat before,' said Chiswick. 'Would you mind setting me the best stroke you know how for a half mile or so down stream?'

"'Not at all,' was the stranger's cheerful response. And at once forward went his long body and deep down into the water went his oars.

"And then he did set the captain a stroke. Chiswick thought he had rowed before, but he had never rowed as he was rowing now. The man in front of him was a wonder. To and fro, up and down, over and over like clockwork went his broad back—34—36—38—Chiswick didn't know how many strokes to the minute, quick strokes and yet long and powerful, and the boat spun along as though it had been shot from something and the half mile was done in no time. Chiswick was done, too. He cried, 'hold on,' to the other fellow, all out of breath; and when the stranger turned around and looked at him in astonishment; he hadn't turned a hair and he breathed as easy as a child asleep.

"Then Chiswick (as soon as he got wind enough) burst out into what was on his mind.

"'Oh, if only I could have you to pull in the race Friday!' cried he.

"'Thanks! I'd like it awfully, you know,' said the stranger.

"'I'd give $500 for you,' declared Chiswick.

"'Would you, indeed?' said the stranger, 'Well, I'm willing, I'm sure.'

"Chiswick gnawed his moustache fiercely a moment. Then,

"'All right,' he exclaimed suddenly. 'It's a bargain. I'll do it if I'm hanged for it. What I want is just this—I'm going to put you in the boat, stroke, in the place of another fellow. You look exactly like him, so exactly that nobody—nobody outside the boat at least—will know the difference. All you've got to do is to keep still and not say a word to anybody as to who you are, or who you are not. And I expect you to win the race for us. Our fellows can pull if they're made to; and your're just the man that can make 'em. And you shall have your $500 the minute the race is over.'

"So that was Chiswick's notion; and I've only to tell you how it worked and what came of it at the very last.

"As for the way it worked, it worked to a charm. The stranger went back to the boat-house with Chiswick and Bancroft, and was given a room like the others. He went to supper with the crew that night in Jennings' place, and he went out in the boat with them the next morning, pulling Jennings' oar. To all intents and purposes he was Jennings. If anybody thought he wasn't, or if anybody knew he wasn't, they didn't say so. They didn't look so. Perhaps they didn't know the difference. Perhaps the word had been passed, and they pretended not to know the difference. Any way, nothing was said, and everything went on exactly as though he was Jennings. Exactly the same, except that the boat went faster. Cæsar or Ostrich! didn't the boat go faster! What a stroke that new man did set them. How he waked them up and put new life into them and made them do such work as they had never supposed themselves capable of before. In that three days he just did wonders with them. And the night before the race Captain Chiswick was just as sure of winning as he was of pulling. He knew it was a foregone conclusion.

"And it was, you know. Don't think I'm going to tell you that the plan failed of success after all. Not a bit of it. It succeeded, and nobody found it out either. That isn't what I'm going to tell you. The race came off at the appointed time, for a wonder, 11:30. There never was a better day—a clear sky, beautiful water, not a breath of wind. I needn't describe the race to you. You've seen plenty, no doubt. The crews came up in their launches, got into the boats, pulled around to the starting place, stripped off their blue and crimson jerseys, and at the word off they went. There was the usual yelling and cheering and steam whistling and hooting, but the boats were soon out of that, and the thing settled down to a test of speed and pluck and endurance between the two as to which should reach the other end of the course soonest. But bless you, there wasn't any doubt from the very first in our boat. We didn't take the lead at first. We didn't want to. We simply wanted to hang close onto the stern of the other boat for the first two miles or so. And we had no trouble in doing that. Indeed, the other crew didn't work over hard those first two miles, either; but that suited us all right. If they wanted to take it easy the first half of the race we were willing. The last mile was the part where we meant to put in our work.

"It was a wonderful spurt when it did come. All at once, just past the third-mile stake, they quickened their stroke, considering that the time had come at last to leave us behind them, and all at once, then, our fellows quickened their stroke, too, and just didn't let them do it. That stroke oar of ours, he looked in the coxswain's eyes and and saw, without a word being said, what was going on, and the next minute down went his head almost into the steerer's lap. And then at it they went, eight men like one, working like beavers. Beavers! Working like insane men. They had to work. There wasn't any get out of it or slack up to it or anything else. There was that big fellow down at the bottom of the row, working back and forth with that long, quick, tremendous stroke, and the next man had to work with him, and the next with him, and so on. And the boat started up as though she had an engine in her somewhere; they were alongside the other crew before you knew it, alongside and then ahead, and then one length you could see between 'em—two—three—four—five—and then you hated to count 'em, you felt so bad for the other fellows, and that's the way the race was won."

The young Harvard fellow ended his story rather abruptly and looked at his three auditors, who had followed his narrative breathless, from start to finish. "Wasn't that quite a scheme?" he asked, with an air of pride.

"I should think so," answered one of the two young Yale fellows soberly. He evidently did not approve the "scheme," though he did not say so.

"But how did they keep it quiet?" asked the second young Yale fellow. "I should think it would have been sure to get out. Didn't the stroke-oar—the professional, I suppose he was—didn't he tell of it?"

"Not a bit of it," replied the young Harvard fellow. "Indeed, that's a part of the story, and rather the best part of it, too, about him. He wasn't a professional at all. Don't think it. Chiswick, as soon after the race as possible, got him into a private room at the quarters, and the treasurer of the University Boat club and two or three other fellows with him, and there the treasurer counted out $500 in greenbacks and handed it to the stranger. He was still a stranger; they didn't even know his name. They asked him for that then, though."

"I've written out a receipt here," the treasurer said to him. "If you'll just put your name to it."

"The stranger took the money and the paper.

"'This,' said he, looking at the roll of bills in an odd sort of a way, 'you wish to pay me for pulling in the race, as I understand it?'

"'Yes,' said the treasurer stiffly, 'I suppose that is the plain truth of it. We don't want it known, though, and we expect you to keep still about it. I've put that in the receipt.'

"'Oh, you don't want me to mention it? Very well; I won't, of course, if you'd prefer not; though I've done nothing, I'm sure, that I am ashamed of.'

"The treasurer bit his lip. 'Will you please sign the paper?' said he.

"The stranger sat down on the table and drew an inkstand toward him. Then he looked up again, with a quizzical air.

"'Upon my word, gentlemen, you have a queer way of doing these things over here. I've pulled in a good many races—I was stroke-oar in the Oxford boat in the last two races with Cambridge—but I don't think I was ever offered pay for it before.'

"You may be sure that when he said that—that he had been stroke-oar of an Oxford crew—those fellows there pricked up their ears and looked at him. And all at once it dawned upon them that he was a very gentlemanly appearing fellow. Not that he appeared any different or looked any different. He had appeared well enough all through, very much for that matter as Jennings himself would have appeared. But they had, up to this moment, carried the idea that he was a professional or something very near that.

"'However,' the stranger went on, 'I'll sign it, of course.'

"He dipped his pen in the ink, and then, after a moment's more hesitation, signed his name to the paper—a very long name, as the treasurer, standing by, could see. Then he got up and handed the receipt to the latter. He handed him somet ing else with it—the roll of bills.

"'You'l permit me to hand you this,' said he, 'as a small contribution to your college boating fund. I'm very much interested in rowing, (indeed, I came over here almost on purpose to see your race, and I think I've seen it very satisfactorily,) and I'm always glad to help the thing along.'

"Then he stepped to the door. There he turned again.

"'Gentlemen, I bid you good day, and I wish you success in a hundred coming races.'

"He made a very grand bow as he backed out of the room, and somehow or other there wasn't a man of those left behind that didn't, at the moment, feel cheap.

"Billings, the treasurer, looked after him until the door closed, and then he looked at the receipt. His eyes seemed to grow big as they dwelt on it.

"'What is it, Billings?' cried the others. 'What's his name. Read it up.'

"Then Billings read the name from the paper—'George Frederic Allan Hervey Walmer.' And he read a card that was there with it, 'Lord Apsley, Brevoort house.'

"'By Jove!' exclaimed he, 'the man's an English lord!'

"'Sure as you're saying it, he is,' cried Buffington, one of the fellows. 'It's Lord Apsley. I saw by the papers only yesterday that he was over here.'

"'Well, upon my word,' declared Chiswick. 'This is a joke on us. We've more reasons than one for keeping the matter quiet. They'd laugh us out of college, if they didn't kick us out, if this thing were known.'

The young Harvard fellow paused again. This time he was through. The other young fellow—not either of the young Yale fellows, but the third young fellow—rose from his seat. The train was just stopping.

"I believe I change here," he said. "Allow me to observe before I go, though, that if what you've told us is a sample of the way you do things at Harvard, then I don't think you'd best say much to us Princeton fellows about the fellows we play on our foot-ball team." Then he was gone.

The two young Yale fellows looked surprised.

"I didn't know that was a Princeton man," one of them said.

"I did," declared the young Harvard fellow. "I knew it all the time. I caught sight of a Princeton freshman pin under his coat. It was he I was telling that story to. It wasn't true, you know. We don't do things that way at Harvard. Don't you believe it! But I just made that story up—reeled it off out of my own head, you know, for his special benefit. He is pleased to death to get hold of such a thing, and he'll take it back to college with him, and they'll have a big talk over it, and it'll get into the New York papers, and it'll be all over the country what wicked fellows we Harvard men are."—Charles Remington.

NOTICE TO CO-OWNERS.—TO MARIA Wilkinson, Allen M. Wilkinson, Raleigh F. Wilkinson, and Thomas J. Loury's estate.

You are hereby notified that I have expended one hundred dollars in labor and improvements upon the Little Jennie No. 3 Quartz Lode, situate in Vaughn mining district, Lewis and Clarke county, State of Montana, as will appear by certificate filed January 11, 1890, in the office of the recorder in said county, in order to hold said premises under the provisions of section 2324, Revised Statutes of the United States, being the amount required to hold the same for the year ending December 31, 1889; and if, within ninety days after this notice of publication, you fail or refuse to contribute your proportion of such expenditure as co-owners, your interest in said claim will become the property of the subscriber under said section 2324.

WILLIAM BRIGGS.

E. M. HOYT, Agent.

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